NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

TO:

☒ **Office of Planning and Research**
PO Box 3044
Sacramento, CA 95812-3044

☒ **Butte County Clerk**
155 Nelson Avenue
Oroville, CA 95965-3411

FROM:

Palermo Union School District
Kathleen Andoe-Nolind, Superintendent
7390 Bulldog Way
Palermo, CA 95968

Project Title: Honcut School Water System Improvement Project

Project Location:
The proposed project is located within the unincorporated community of Honcut in Butte County, in Section 16, Township 17N, Range 4E, of the US. Geological Survey's (USGS) Honcut 7.5-minute quadrangle. The proposed project includes construction of a new well and associated improvements serving the Honcut Elementary School. The School District owns three parcels on the west side of East Street (Butte County Assessor's Parcel Numbers (APNs) 028-073-001, -014, and -003) and one parcel on the east side of East Street (APN 028-074-001). The well would be located on the latter; piping would be extended under East Street to the school buildings on APN 028-073-001.

City: Honcut (unincorporated) | **County:** Butte

Description of Nature, Purpose, and Beneficiaries of Project:

The Honcut School Water System (Public Water System CA 0400060) provides potable water to approximately 40 students, teachers, and part-time staff during the school year through two service connections. Water is also used to irrigate approximately 0.25 acres on the school property. The water system consists of a 90-foot deep well, 86-gallon bladder tank, 250-gallon storage tank, and a distribution system. The well, constructed in 1931, has been exceeding the maximum contaminant level (MCL) for nitrate since 2015. In 2019, the water system received a Compliance Order from the Butte County Public Health Department (BCPHD) directing the school to achieve compliance with the MCL for nitrate. Additionally, portions of the existing pipeline from the well to the School are approximately 90 years old and are deteriorating. Therefore, the project includes improvements to the Honcut School Water System that are required in order to replace aging infrastructure, comply with BCPHD requirements, and ensure a safe and reliable water supply for students and teachers. In addition to constructing a new well, improvements include the following items:

- Constructing a new concrete masonry unit (CMU) block well building to house the new well, with a separate room for chemical dosing equipment;
- Installing a 50 gallons per minute (GPM) submersible well pump;
- Installing a day tank, pump, and appurtenances to dose the well water with sodium hypochlorite;
- Installing a 400-gallon hydropneumatic tank;
- Installing new piping and appurtenances to connect the new well to Classroom 3 and the irrigation system;
- Installing an automatic transfer switch and an electrical conduit to connect to a future generator;
- Installing fencing to protect the well building;
- Destroying the old well per Department of Water Resources (DWR) Bulletin 74-81 and 74-90; and,
- Removing the building and all aboveground appurtenances associated with the old well.

Staging of materials and construction equipment would occur within school-owned parcels. Site preparation and grading would be required; however, no trees would be removed.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: Palermo Union School District

Name of Agency Carrying out the Project: Palermo Union School District

Local Agency Contact Person: Kathleen Andoe-Nolind, Superintendent, 530.533.4842

Exempt Status: Categorical Exemption:

California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Division 6, Chapter 3 (CEQA Guidelines):

Class 2, §15302 (Replacement or Reconstruction)

Class 3, §15303 (New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures)

Class 4, §15304 (Minor Alterations to Land)

Reason Why Project Is Exempt:

Class 2 consists of replacement or reconstruction of existing structures and facilities (including schools and utility systems) where the new structure will be located on the same site as the structure replaced and will have substantially the same purpose and capacity as the structure replaced. Class 3 includes the construction/installation of limited numbers of new, small facilities or structures; and/or installation of small new equipment and facilities in small structures. Class 4 includes minor alterations to the condition of land (e.g., clearing, grading, trenching, and backfilling) that do not involve the removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees, and do not involve grading in wetlands or other waters, provided that the surface is restored following construction.

The project is consistent with the categorical exemptions noted above because work would consist of the replacement of the existing well and distribution line, construction of new small structures, and minor alterations to the land. Only minor earth disturbance would be required to accommodate the proposed project, and the ground surface would be restored following construction. No mature trees would be removed, and no expansion of the District's water system would occur. No wetlands or other waters are present on the project site.

As documented in **Attachment A**, the proposed project would not have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances; would not result in damage to scenic resources within a scenic highway; is not located on a hazardous waste site pursuant to §65962.5 of the Government Code; would not cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource; and would not result in cumulative impacts.

Signature: Kathleen Andoe-Nolind **Date:** 12/16/2021

Kathleen Andoe-Nolind, Superintendent
Palermo Union School District

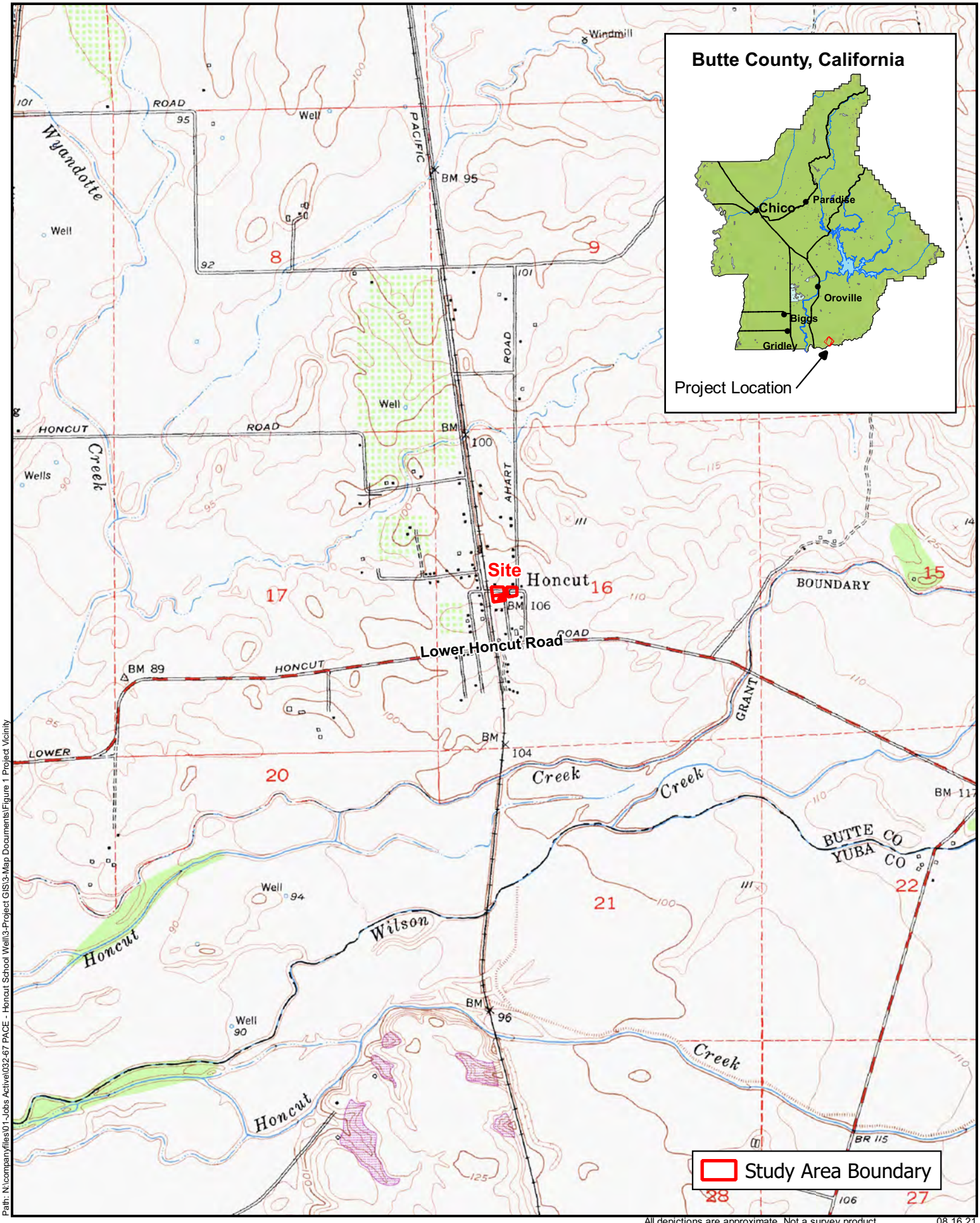
Date Received for Filing at OPR: _____

Attachments:

Figure 1: Project Vicinity and Location

Figure 2: Site Plan

Attachment A: Documentation in Support of a Categorical Exemption



Path: N:\companyfiles\01-Jobs Active\032-67 PACE - Honcut School Well\3-Project GIS\3-Map Documents\Figure 1 Project Vicinity

All depictions are approximate. Not a survey product. 08.16.21

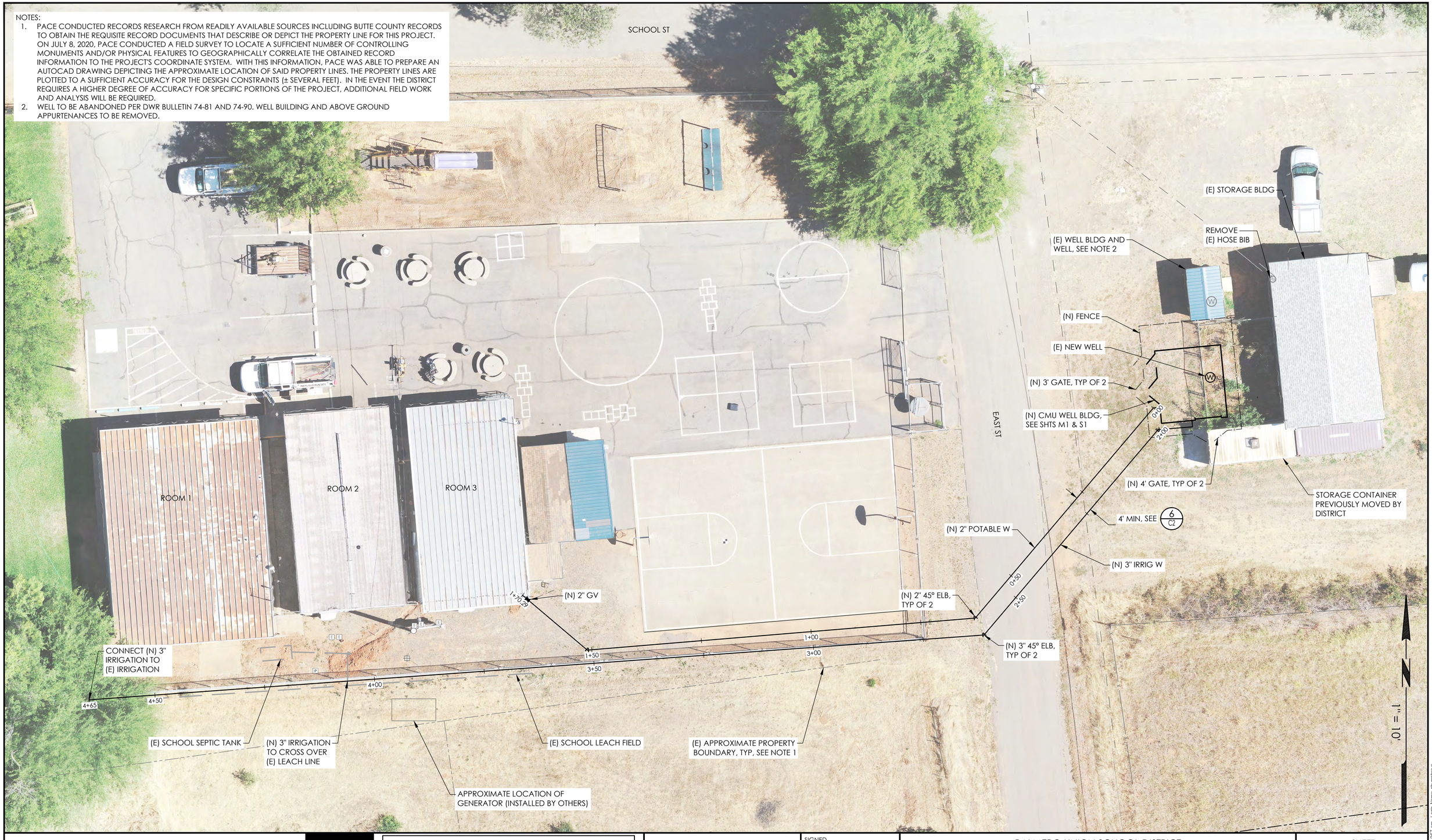
Figure 1

Project Vicinity and Location

ENPLAN

NOTES:

1. PACE CONDUCTED RECORDS RESEARCH FROM READILY AVAILABLE SOURCES INCLUDING BUTTE COUNTY RECORDS TO OBTAIN THE REQUISITE RECORD DOCUMENTS THAT DESCRIBE OR DEPICT THE PROPERTY LINE FOR THIS PROJECT. ON JULY 8, 2020, PACE CONDUCTED A FIELD SURVEY TO LOCATE A SUFFICIENT NUMBER OF CONTROLLING MONUMENTS AND/OR PHYSICAL FEATURES TO GEOGRAPHICALLY CORRELATE THE OBTAINED RECORD INFORMATION TO THE PROJECT'S COORDINATE SYSTEM. WITH THIS INFORMATION, PACE WAS ABLE TO PREPARE AN AUTOCAD DRAWING DEPICTING THE APPROXIMATE LOCATION OF SAID PROPERTY LINES. THE PROPERTY LINES ARE PLOTTED TO A SUFFICIENT ACCURACY FOR THE DESIGN CONSTRAINTS (± SEVERAL FEET). IN THE EVENT THE DISTRICT REQUIRES A HIGHER DEGREE OF ACCURACY FOR SPECIFIC PORTIONS OF THE PROJECT, ADDITIONAL FIELD WORK AND ANALYSIS WILL BE REQUIRED.
2. WELL TO BE ABANDONED PER DWR BULLETIN 74-81 AND 74-90. WELL BUILDING AND ABOVE GROUND APPURTENANCES TO BE REMOVED.



50% DRAFT

BAR IS ONE INCH ON ORIGINAL DRAWING
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IF NOT ONE INCH ON THIS SHEET, ADJUST SCALES ACCORDINGLY.

REVISIONS

NO	DATE	DESCRIPTION

PACE ENGINEERING

DES	NH	CKD	TWW	JOB NO.
DRN	NH	DATE	10/1/2021	2630.10

SIGNED

PALMERO UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT
HONCUT SCHOOL WELL

SITE PLAN

SHEET
C1
PG 4 OF XX

Plot Date: December 14, 2021 - 9:57 am Login Name: mhumphreys
File Name: M:\Land Projects\2630.10 Honcut School Well\DWG\Service Area & Proposed Improvements.dwg Layout: SITE PLAN

ATTACHMENT A

Documentation in Support of a Categorical Exemption

Palermo Union School District,
Honcut School Water System improvement Project

As described in the Notice of Exemption (NOE), the proposed project is categorically exempt from CEQA pursuant to §15302 (Class 2-Replacement or Reconstruction), §15303 (Class 3-New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures), and §15304 (Class 4-Minor Alterations to Land) of the CEQA Guidelines. CEQA Guidelines §15300.2 identifies exceptions that override a lead agency's ability to use a categorical exemption. These exceptions are listed below, followed by documentation of why each exception does not apply to the proposed project.

1. Cumulative Impact. *All exemptions are inapplicable when the cumulative impact of successive projects of the same type in the same place, over time, is significant.*

The proposed project would include construction of a new well, well house, hydropneumatic tank, chlorination equipment, and installation of new pipeline and appurtenant improvements to replace aging infrastructure, comply with BCPHD requirements, and ensure a safe and reliable water supply for students and teachers. Future projects proposed in the same locations include the installation of a new generator. As discussed under Noise below, its potential noise impacts should be considered as a cumulative impact. However, the generator would only be used in the event of a power outage and noise level increases would be temporary in nature. Likewise, potential effects of the proposed project are temporary and would cease at completion of construction, and no increase in capacity would occur. Therefore, the project's impacts would not be cumulatively considerable.

2. Significant Effect. *A categorical exemption shall not be used for an activity where there is a reasonable possibility that the activity will have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances.*

An "unusual circumstance" exists if the project's circumstances differ from the general circumstances of projects covered by the applicable exemption, and, if so, whether there is a reasonable possibility of a significant effect on the environment *due to* the unusual circumstances. As documented below, there are no unusual circumstances that would preclude a categorical exemption for the proposed project.

Aesthetics:

The proposed project consists of the construction of a new well, well house, hydropneumatic tank, and chlorination equipment, new pipeline, new conduit, and other appurtenant improvements. The existing well building would be removed following completion of the new well and well house. Additional existing facilities on site include a storage building, classroom buildings, and playground equipment; the proposed construction would be visually consistent with these features and would not conflict with the existing visual character of the area. Additionally, the project site is not an area of unique scenic vistas and temporary visual impacts during construction due to excavation and staging activities would cease upon the completion of the improvements; no unusual circumstances apply, and no significant impacts would occur.

Agriculture and Forest Resources:

Improvements would occur in the developed areas on school-owned property, and no mature trees would be removed. The parcels are zoned Public and Very Low Density Residential. Therefore, there would be no impact on agricultural lands or forest resources.

Air Quality/Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions:

The proposed project would result in the temporary generation of ROG, NOx, PM_{10}, and other regulated pollutants during construction. ROG and NOx emissions are associated with employee vehicle trips,

delivery of materials, and construction equipment exhaust. PM_{10} is generated during site preparation, excavation, road paving, and from exhaust associated with construction equipment. The project does not include any components that would result in a long-term increase in emissions. There are no unusual circumstances associated with air quality that would preclude a categorical exemption for the proposed project.

Biological Resources:

Special-Status Species

The evaluation of potential impacts to special-status species and sensitive habitats was based on a records search and field observations. Records reviewed for the evaluation consisted of California Natural Diversity Data Base (CNDDB) records for special-status plants, animals, and natural communities; the California Native Plant Society (CNPS) Inventory of Rare and Endangered Plants; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) records for federally listed, proposed, and Candidate plant and animal species under jurisdiction of the USFWS; and USFWS records for migratory birds of conservation concern; because the nearest stream is a half-mile south of the project site, there was no need to check National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) records for anadromous fish species under the jurisdiction of the NMFS.

Review of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service species list for the project area did not identify any federally listed plant species as potentially occurring in the project area. The project area does not contain designated critical habitat for federally listed plant species.

A review of California Natural Diversity Data Base (CNDDB) records showed that no special-status plants have been reported in the project site. Two special-status plants, Ahart's dwarf rush and Ahart's paronychia, have been reported within an approximate five-mile radius of the project site. No non-status plant species were reported within the search radius.

Review of the USFWS species list for the project area identified the following federally listed animal species as potentially being present in the project area: giant garter snake, California red-legged frog, Delta smelt, valley elderberry longhorn beetle (VELB), vernal pool fairy shrimp, and vernal pool tadpole shrimp. The USFWS species list does not identify designated critical habitat in the study area for any federally listed animal species.

A review of CNNNDB records showed that no special-status wildlife species have been reported in the project site. The following special-status wildlife species have been reported within an approximate five-mile radius of the project site: bank swallow, California black rail, Chinook salmon – Central Valley spring-run ESU, giant gartersnake, steelhead – Central Valley DPS, Swainson's hawk, tricolored blackbird, VELB, vernal pool fairy shrimp, vernal pool tadpole shrimp, and western spadefoot. One non-status animal, California linderiella, has also been mapped within the search radius.

A field evaluation was completed by an ENPLAN biologist on July 2, 2020. Some of the special-status species potentially occurring in the project area would not have been evident at the time the fieldwork was conducted; however, determination of their potential presence could readily be made based on observed habitat characteristics. No special-status species or habitats capable of supporting such species were observed during the field survey. The proposed activity would not have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances.

Natural Communities

The field evaluation confirmed that the study area has been substantially disturbed in the past, and currently supports an elementary school, well and well building, and leachfield. The plant community present on the site is best described as urban. The dominant plant species are horticultural specimens such as mulberry, elm, Lombardy poplar, thornless roses, and turf grasses. Numerous introduced weedy species are also present, including ripgut brome, soft chess, slender wild oats, three-spiked goosegrass, pokeweed, yellow star-thistle, and sheep sorrel. No wetlands, streams, other Waters of the State or United States, or sensitive natural communities are present on or adjacent to the project site.

Nesting Birds

Trees and shrubs on the project site have a low to moderate potential to support nesting birds during the breeding season (February 1 through August 31); however, this is not an unusual circumstance. In any case, existing state and federal laws are in place to protect nesting birds. Compliance with these laws and implementation of standard construction practices would ensure that nesting birds are not adversely affected by project implementation.

Energy:

The proposed project does not include any components that would result in environmental impacts due to the wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources in the long-term. There are no unique circumstances related to energy use during construction of the proposed project that would result in more significant impacts than other similar construction projects.

Geology and Soils:

According to the Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map for Butte County, the nearest Alquist-Priolo Special Study Zone to the project area is the Cleveland Hill Fault, approximately nine miles northeast of the project site. The nearest potentially active faults are located nearly eight miles east of the project area in the Foothills Fault System Zone.

Soils on the project site are mapped by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) as Kimball loam, 1 to 3 percent slopes. These soil types are found throughout the project area and are not unique to the project site. There are no unique circumstances related to geology and soils that would result in more significant impacts than other similar construction projects in the area.

Hydrology and Water Quality:

Construction activities would result in the temporary disturbance of soil and would expose disturbed areas to potential storm events, which could generate accelerated runoff, localized erosion, and sedimentation. However, this is a temporary impact during construction activities, and no long-term impacts would occur. Best Management Practices (BMPs) for erosion/sediment control would be implemented in accordance with resource agency permit conditions, which would prevent damage to streams, watercourses, and aquatic habitats.

According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Flood Insurance Rate Map (Panel 06007C1150E, 06/06/2011, Not Printed), the project area is designated as Zone X (an area of minimal flood hazard); the project does not include any components that would impede or redirect flood flows or otherwise adversely affect the natural value and functions of the floodplain. Additionally, the proposed well would replace an existing well and water use would stay the same; therefore, the project would not affect the availability of ground water to nearby users. There are no unique circumstances related to hydrology or water quality that would result in more significant impacts than other similar construction projects in the area.

Land Use and Planning:

The project would not physically divide an established community or cause an environmental impact due to a conflict with a land use plan, policy, or regulation.

Mineral Resources:

The California Geological Survey has not designated any Mineral Resource Zones in the study area. In addition, there are no properties in the project area that are zoned or used for mining activities.

Noise:

Construction activities would temporarily increase noise levels in the area. Additionally, operation of well equipment could generate noise. However, because the water pumps and other mechanical equipment would be housed in the well building, noise generation would be negligible. The project is designed to accommodate installation of a future generator; although installation of the generator is not proposed as

part of the current project, its potential effects are considered as a related/cumulative project. The generator would only be used in the event of a power outage and associated impacts would be temporary in nature. There are no long-term or unusual circumstances associated with noise that would preclude a categorical exemption for the proposed project.

Population and Housing:

The proposed project consists of the replacement of an existing water system serving the Honcut Elementary School with new facilities that would comply with BCPHD requirements, and ensure a safe and reliable water supply for students and teachers. Because the project would not increase the effective capacity of the water system and would serve only the elementary school, the project would not induce substantial unplanned population growth in the area. There are no unusual circumstances associated with population or housing that would preclude a categorical exemption for the proposed project.

Public Services/Recreation:

Because the project would not induce population growth, the project would not generate a demand for additional fire protection, police protection, schools, parks/recreational facilities, or other public services.

Transportation/Traffic:

There would be short-term local increases in traffic associated with construction workers and equipment; however, existing regulations require safety measures to be employed to safeguard travel by the general public during construction. The project does not include any components that would create a traffic hazard and would not substantially affect traffic volumes. The proposed activity would not have a significant effect with respect to traffic and transportation due to unusual circumstances.

Utilities and Service Systems:

Because the project would not induce population growth in the area, the project would not generate a demand for additional fire protection, police protection, schools, parks, recreational facilities, or other public services. The well would replace an existing well serving the school. There are no unusual circumstances associated with utilities and service systems that would preclude a categorical exemption for the proposed project.

Wildfire:

The proposed project does not include any development or improvements that would increase the long-term risk of wildland fires or expose people or structures to wildland fires. There are no unique circumstances associated with the proposed project that would result in more significant impacts than other similar projects in the area.

3. Scenic Highways. *A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project which may result in damage to scenic resources, including but not limited to, trees, historic buildings, rock outcroppings, or similar resources, within a highway officially designated as a State Scenic Highway.*
According to the California Scenic Highway Mapping System, there are no officially designated State Scenic Highways in the project area; therefore, there would be no impact.

4. Hazardous Waste Sites. *A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project located on a site which is included on any list compiled pursuant to §65962.5 of the Government Code.*

The following databases were reviewed to locate "Cortese List" sites.

- List of Hazardous Waste and Substances sites from the Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) EnviroStor database.
- SWRCB GeoTracker Database.
- List of solid waste disposal sites identified by SWRCB with waste constituents above hazardous waste levels outside the waste management unit.
- List of active Cease and Desist Orders and Clean-Up and Abatement Orders from the SWRCB.

The records search revealed that the project is not located on a hazardous waste site. There are no active clean-up sites or hazardous waste sites within a one-mile radius of the project area.

5. Historical Resources. A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project which may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource.

A Cultural Resources Inventory Report (CRI) was completed for the proposed project by ENPLAN. The study included a records search, Native American consultation, and field evaluation. The records search included review of records at the Northeast Information Center of the California Historical Resources Information System (NEIC/CHRIS), and a review of historic maps, the *National Register of Historic Places, California Register of Historic Resources*, *California Historical Landmarks*, *California Inventory of Historic Resources,* and *California Points of Historic Interest.* Archaeological fieldwork took place on September 22, 2020, during which the APE was intensively surveyed to identify cultural resources that would be potentially affected by the proposed project.

The records search was conducted at the Northeast Information Center of the California Historical Resources Information System on September 2, 2020, and covered a half-mile radius around the Area of Potential Effects (APE). The records search revealed that one archaeological survey has been conducted within a half-mile radius of the APE and two archaeological sites have been previously recorded within a half-mile radius of the APE.

On August 1, 2020, the Native American Heritage Commission conducted a search of the Sacred Lands File and indicated that no known Native American sacred sites or cultural resources are located in the project area. The NAHC also provided contact information for the following tribes: KonKow Valley Band of Maidu, Mechoopda Indian Tribe, Mooretown Rancheria of Maidu Indians, Mooretown Rancheria of Maidu Indians, Tsi Akim Maidu, and United Auburn Indian Community of the Auburn Rancheria. ENPLAN sent comment solicitation letters to the aforementioned tribes on August 17, 2020. A response was received from the Mooretown Rancheria dated August 31, 2020, indicating that no cultural resources were known to be in the area. Follow-up correspondence was conducted on September 18, 2020, and no other responses were received.

The CRI concluded that the project would have no effect on any known cultural resources. Based on the geomorphological and topographic characteristics of the project area, the results of the records and literature search, and the age of the soils mapped in the area, the project area is considered to have a low potential for buried historic and prehistoric resources. However, because there is always some potential for previously unknown cultural resources to be encountered during site excavation, the following standard construction measures would be included in construction contracts for the project to address the inadvertent discovery of cultural resources and human remains:

1. If any human remains are encountered during any phase of construction, all earth-disturbing work shall stop within 50 feet of the find. The county coroner shall be contacted to determine whether investigation of the cause of death is required as well as to determine whether the remains may be Native American in origin. Should Native American remains be discovered, the county coroner must contact the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC). The NAHC will then determine those persons it believes to be most likely descended from the deceased Native American(s). Together with representatives of the people of most likely

descent, a qualified archaeologist can make an assessment of the discovery and recommend/implement mitigation measures as necessary.

2. If any previously unevaluated cultural resources (i.e., burnt animal bone, midden soils, projectile points or other humanly modified lithics, historic artifacts, etc.) are encountered, all earth-disturbing work shall stop within 50 feet of the find until a qualified archaeologist can make an assessment of the discovery and recommend/implement mitigation measures as necessary. Depending on the type and significance of the find, subsequent monitoring by an archaeologist or Native American may be warranted. This stipulation does not apply to those cultural resources evaluated and determined not Historical Resources/Historic Properties in this report.

3. In the event that project plans change to include areas not surveyed, additional archaeological reconnaissance may be required. If cultural resources are encountered, the archaeologist shall recommend/implement additional mitigation measures as necessary, which may include subsequent monitoring by an archaeologist or Native American.

DOCUMENTATION:

Butte County. 2012. Butte County General Plan – Land Use Map. https://www.buttecounty.net/Portals/10/Docs/GP2030/Chapters/AMENDED_GPLU_110612_Esize.pdf. Accessed June 2020.

____. 2020. Butte County Codes and Ordinances. https://library.municode.com/ca/butte_county/codes/code_of_ordinances. Accessed June 2020.

California Air Resources Control Board. 2020. Area Designations Maps—State and National. http://www.arb.ca.gov/desig/adm/adm.htm. Accessed June 2020.

California Department of Conservation. 2015. California Geological Survey. Mineral Land Classification Maps. http://maps.conservation.ca.gov/cgs/informationwarehouse/index.html?map=mlc. Accessed June 2020.

_____. 2019. Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Act. http://www.conservation.ca.gov/CGS/rghm/ap/. Accessed June 2020.

_____. 2016. California Important Farmland Finder Map. https://maps.conservation.ca.gov/dlrp/ciff/. Accessed June 2020.

_____. 1997. Special Publication 42, Fault-Rupture Hazard Zones in California. http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/EART/UCONLY/CDMG/north/sp42.pdf. Accessed June 2020.

_____. 2019. Earthquake Zones of Required Investigation. https://maps.conservation.ca.gov/cgs/EQZApp/app/. Accessed June 2020.

California Department of Transportation. 2019. California State Scenic Highway Mapping System. Shasta County. https://dot.ca.gov/programs/design/lap-landscape-architecture-and-community-livability/lap-liv-i-scenic-highways. Accessed June 2020.

California Environmental Protection Agency. 2020. Cortese List Data Resources. http://www.calepa.ca.gov/sitecleanup/corteselist/. Accessed June 2020.

ENPLAN. 2021. Cultural Resources Inventory, Honcut School Water System Improvement Project.

Federal Emergency Management Agency. National Flood Hazard Map (Panel 06007C1150E June 6th, 2011). https://msc.fema.gov/portal/search?AddressQuery=mt.%20shasta%2C%20ca#searchresultsanchor. Accessed June 2020.

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resource Conservation Service. 2019. Web Soil Survey. https://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/WebSoilSurvey.aspx. Accessed June 2020.

U.S. Geological Survey. 2015. U.S. Quaternary Faults, Interactive Fault Map. https://usgs.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=5a6038b3a1684561a9b0aadf88412fcf. Accessed June 2020.